

Commissioner's Decision and Order
The Hope High School Complex:
Progress Report #3

Presented to Commissioner Peter McWalters
By
Nicholas C. Donohue, Special Master
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INTRODUCTION and OVERVIEW

Task Charge - Review

This is the third in a series of reports called for by the Decision and Order for Hope High School in Providence, Rhode Island delivered by Commissioner Peter McWalters in February of 2005.

The purpose of these reports is to provide a public vehicle for tracking progress toward the goals and objectives of the Commissioner's Decision and Order. To accomplish this – and consistent with the first two reports - this document will highlight positive developments, identify areas that need some additional attention and, if there are any, it will also identify areas of critical concern.

The report is presented in five sections. The first, *Introduction and Overview*, provides background and orientation about the Order and the report format as well as summary determination of Progress To Date.

The next section, *Part I – Commissioner's Decision and Order – Student Success at Hope*, describes successful implementation of the Order in terms of student outcomes. *Part II – Commissioner's Decision and Order – Areas of Compliance*, focuses on the prescriptions of the Order and progress toward their implementation. The updates on each area of compliance include lists of areas of strong performance; recommendations for improvement and areas of critical concern are provided.

A final section *Part III - District Support for Change at Hope* addresses issues concerning Providence School District capacity to contribute toward positive change at Hope. The report ends with a *In Closing* section, which summarizes findings and recommendations.

Factors And Process For Determining Progress Made

In determining the sufficiency of implementation of the elements of the Order for the purposes of this report a number of factors have been taken into account.

First, the primary bases for determination of progress are the specific expectations articulated in the Order, related and available indicators, and observable evidence of achievement to high standards of implementation. In other words, what does the Order say needs to occur, are those issues being attended to, are they being attended to well, what is the relevant evidence that supports the findings of progress?

Second, are there significant mitigating circumstances that might legitimately impact the pace or depth of implementation?

Lastly, are there elements of the Order that, upon reflection some months after it's writing, deserve reconsideration or amendment? Put another way, does everything in the

Order still make sense to do the way it is described in the Order? What changes, if any, need to be considered?

So, while the Order and its specific prescriptions are the most significant basis for determining the levels of progress achieved there are also other factors taken into consideration. In the end, the determination of progress, while informed by data and supported by evidence is based significantly on the professional judgment of the Special Master as authorized in the Order itself.

For the purposes of this report, determinations of progress have been made through a combination of data collected through: 1) a series of “Learning Walks” made complex-wide and in each Small Learning Community (Arts, Leadership and Information Technology (IT)); 2) a review of student and staff interviews; 3) the collection of evidence in the form of written artifacts, 4) SALT Survey Data collected this winter, and 5) on-site observations made by the Special Master over the past three months.

Determination Of Progress - Summary

It has been a good year at Hope. The orderly school climate established at the beginning of the year has been maintained. In addition, there is a growing sense of community and caring. Students perceive a greater interest on the part of staff and the administrators are approachable and available to students. Teaching and learning is the focus of classroom activities. There is a growing sense of school spirit among staff and students. The balance of work and attention continues to shift from behavior management to instructional improvement; from getting through “today” to “preparing for tomorrow.”

There remain significant challenges and related tasks. Attendance is too low, failure rates too high. Parent involvement has grown somewhat, but there is far to go. While there have been regular engagement of students on a variety of topics, the volume of “student voices” must be stronger.

The facility is still in disrepair - the auditorium inaccessible. The school year began with an evacuation because of a leaking roof. The end of the year was marked by another day lost due to this situation.

Efforts to create deeper, relevant real world learning experiences must increase. Clarity and communication about school reform strategies and plans must be improved so that they make sense to a broader range of stakeholders.

And while administrators continue to work effectively, there is a strong need for a broader and more inclusive management structure in which various roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated and distributed among a wider group of “school leaders.” Developing these structures is part of what needs to happen to build an even more cohesive community at Hope.

However, much has been accomplished. School Improvement Teams (SITs) are meeting. School improvement plans have been written and submitted to the district for approval. Significant steps have been made toward meeting pending state regulations regarding graduation requirements, personalization and literacy. The advisory system is maturing. Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) have been drafted for each student. Each Small Learning Community – Arts, IT and Leadership - is organizing for a closer look inward to clarify thematic identities. Efforts to address the under preparedness of incoming students have been inventive and seem to be having a positive impact on student performance.

Well-organized, persistent activity to build shared understanding among faculty members concerning what is expected of students is underway. Community partners – especially higher education partners – are making a real impact on what goes on inside Hope. The placement of a “coach” by the Rhode Island Department of Education Progressive Support and Intervention Office has been a real benefit for Hope.

Professional development planning is on schedule. And, for the first time, the complex as a whole faces the real possibility of becoming fully accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

The varied successes taken with the remaining challenges, paint a predictable picture of a school on the rise.

It is the judgment of the Special Master that while there are specific areas that need attention and improvement to sustain the positive progress made to date, progress toward implementation of the Order continues to be satisfactory and positive.

Part I - The Commissioner's Decision And Order: Student Success At Hope

The Decision and Order describes many activities, and attending to the successful implementation of those activities is essential, but the bottom line must remain – are students succeeding? The Commissioner's Order identifies these longer-term student success measures as the ultimate purpose of the Order itself.

Student Success at Hope: What We Are Trying To Accomplish
Students Go To School And Stay
Attendance is almost perfect. Tardiness is almost non-existent and always for understandable reasons. Suspensions are rare. Dropouts are in single digits percentage wise.
Students Succeed in School
Test scores go up, dramatically, in all academic areas and for all students. Exhibitions evidence high skills in problem solving, communication, collaboration and other life-long skills. A vast majority of students graduate, graduate on time and graduate prepared for their next step in life.
Students Have Successful Futures*
Graduates are “better” for having attended Hope. They enroll in college, persist and graduate. They participate in the communities in which they live. Hope grads get and keep good jobs.

Progress to Date

Progress Report #1 released in the summer of 2005 presented both an ambitious set of *Future Expectations* and an analysis of the *Current Status* at Hope through the lens of a variety of indicators related to the Student Success framework described above. Progress Report #2 released this past winter painted a picture of a good start to the school year with many positive accomplishments and a clear need to focus on some basic priorities.

This coming school year there must be an immediate and intense effort to:

- 1) Get students to school (increase attendance),*
- 2) Keep them in school (reduce suspensions and dropout)*
- 3) Increase aspirations of all students at Hope and especially the incoming 9th graders.*

Progress Report #1, p. 7

The news on these measures is mixed. On the one hand attendance and tardiness are holding at previous levels and are near district averages. In order for school to have a positive impact on student learning, students need to be in school.

There is no lack of concern about the attendance situation at Hope. It plagues the administrators and faculty who are at wits end in terms of what to do about it. Suspensions are still well below previous years' levels.

In addition, there is emerging evidence that student aspirations are increasing. The "message" from administrators and teachers is very positive and unrelenting. This is important because we know that when teachers believe students can succeed they are more likely to do just that. In this case the "words" matter. SALT Survey data bears out this positive trend with students and teachers reporting that teacher and student expectations are increasing.

Dropout rates are calculated on a yearly basis. Thus, clear and final data about dropout will only be available after the end of the school year. However, particular prescriptions embedded within the Commissioner's Order that are intended to reduce dropout have been successfully or partially implemented. Those include: 1) a differentiated program of study for students entering Hope far below grade level in English Language Arts and Math, 2) the identification of Advisors for each and every Hope student; and 3) Credit Audits for every student that identify the gap between credits the student has earned so far and what is needed for graduation and 4) a Credit Recovery Program for students who fail coursework.

One issue is the level of rigor of Credit Recovery opportunities and the alignment of the standards that drive this remedial invention with the districts own scope and sequence. In short, are the opportunities that students have to make up work equitable with what was expected of them in the first place?

Failure rates are still high in all three Hope SLCs. There is also great variation of passing rates from course to course and SLC to SLC. It is possible that there is wide variety of effective and ineffective teaching strategies being applied. However, it is also likely that a variety of standards are being applied when it comes to judging student work and assigning a grade.

Both of these variations are common. Work is being done to address both of these inconsistencies. Over time there will be greater consistency in terms of grading.

Another critical issue that has been raised in both previous reports is the concern about the level of preparedness of incoming students. This is exacerbated by the expectation that students join a high school scope and sequence that begins with ninth grade skills and knowledge. While it is important to have high expectations for students, the reality is that the gap between the skills and knowledge of incoming students and the level of work demanded by the scope and sequence is vast.

A conservative analysis suggests that most students come to Hope at least two years behind in math and English language arts. Some suggest that the scope of the issue is much more serious with gaps of three to five years the norm.

In any event, there is no greater block to real, sustained reform than the under preparedness of incoming students. Efforts to create a world-class educational institution are hampered by demands to bring students up to speed just to meet the beginning points of the challenge of high school.

An initial look at this year's data suggests that the double block invention is having a positive impact on student performance indicated by a significant improvement in assessment scores for some students – making nearly two years of performance growth in a years time. This is very good news. Through creative scheduling, staffing and school-based budgeting some of these effective remedial methods are planned for more students next year.

The issue of what to with chronic “repeaters” has also been a serious issue at Hope. Next year, instead of simply making sophomores repeat the Algebra I course many fail in ninth grade, they will have the opportunity to take a math course that begins with Algebra I but accelerates to cover Geometry as well. Thus, successful students will end the tenth grade where they should be instead of being perpetually one year behind grade level. This kind of creative problem solving has characterized much of what has gone at Hope this year.

The “double block” approach described above, the Credit Recovery opportunities and tutoring are all appropriate inventions. The issue of the quality, consistency and rigor of these approaches is paramount. It is essential, that quality control processes are established to make sure the same high standards are the basis for educational experiences that are meant to be equitable.

One highlight this year is the large majority of graduating seniors who report higher education as their next step. By some counts, more than ninety percent of this group have been accepted and plan to pursue some form of post secondary education. This is a very positive sign.

Overall, the picture concerning improvements in the area of *Student Success at Hope* is, as introduced, mixed. It is the area that has seen some of the most important and creative work on curriculum, assessment and remediation with unexpected, positive results in terms of student achievement.

On the other hand, the situation as it regards attendance is, by and of itself and area of critical concern. As such, remedies must be the highest priority for school and district staff as well as community partners and parents.

Part II - The Commissioner's Decision and Order - Areas of Compliance

Because of the urgency related to the Hope High School Complex and its levels of performance there are intermediate, process goals established in the Order. These inputs are designed to contribute significantly to the student success measures reviewed in the previous section of this report. Thus, the specific areas of compliance articulated in the Order can be framed as investments toward the larger good of student success at Hope.

The Order itself can be described in terms of four general areas of compliance. The areas of compliance include: 1) The establishment of three autonomous, small learning communities, 2) increased “personalization” of learning for students, 3) professionalizing the workplace with and for staff; and 4) the involvement of parents, students and community members as full partners. Each of these areas is further defined and progress measured against a set of specific sub-elements originating within the Order.

Areas of Compliance	
Three Small Learning Communities	Personalization of Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Community✓ Clear Autonomy✓ Academy Themes✓ Learning Standards✓ Attention to Student Interests✓ Appropriate Schedule✓ 9th and 10th Grade Academy Structure✓ System for Ensuring Student Success✓ Shared Governance✓ Data Driven Planning✓ Sufficient Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Focused Instructional Strategies✓ Vibrant Advisory Structure✓ Committed Adult Advocates✓ Substantive Family Connections✓ Personal Learning Plans for All✓ Comprehensive Counseling Applied
Professionalism in Practice	Active Parents/Community Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Strong Leadership✓ Effective Teaching and Learning✓ Teacher Quality and Leadership✓ Appropriate Case Loads✓ High Quality Professional Development✓ Adequate Resources and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ High Quality Plans for Inclusion✓ Meaningful Participation in Governance✓ Sustained Organization✓ Written Community Partnership Agreements✓ Real Educational Connections✓ Inclusive Curriculum Design✓ Coordinated Delivery of Services✓ Links Through Advisories✓ Meaningful Youth Leadership
Methods of Measuring Progress and Success	
SALT Survey, Local Interviews, Observations/Learning Walks, Review of Artifacts, Test Scores, Data Points, Professional Judgment	

Area #1 – Three, Autonomous Small Learning Communities

Three Autonomous Small Learning Communities: What are we trying to accomplish	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Autonomy Academy Themes 	<p>The Hope Complex will be home to three vibrant, world-class communities of learning. Three distinct “schools” running independently with a limited number of operational issues managed through the Campus Coordinating Council. Deep, rich and distinct academic “themes” supported by community partners are evident and persistent for each SLC.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning Standards Student Interests Schedule 	<p>There are clearly articulated, ambitious learning standards for students that are understood by all students, teachers, parents and community members. All students have access to high-level coursework. Student needs and interests drive everything – staffing, schedule, professional development, etc. There is a schedule in place that supports personalized approaches to student learning. The schedule also accommodates deeply integrated partnerships and students “going to school” outside of the facility at partner sites.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9th and 10th Grade Academy Structure 	<p>There is a 9th and 10th grade academy structure that promotes the identity of each SLC, allows for sufficient exploration on the part of “undeclared” 9th and 10th graders, prevents dropouts and promotes personalization.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System for Ensuring Student Success 	<p>The district Student Success Initiative is fully implemented in collaboration with community partners. Expectations regarding student and staff behaviors are reviewed and understood by all.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared Governance 	<p>Three independent School Improvement Teams are up and running, fully representative of parents, students, teachers and community members. The focus of SIT work is high stakes educational issues, particularly raising student achievement and the personalization of learning for each and every Hope student. Group process is managed at a high level.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive, Data Driven Planning 	<p>Improvement planning is data-rich, transparent; results oriented, framed within clear, feasible timelines and followed up on regularly and responsibly. A wide variety of constituents participate in meaningful roles.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient Resources 	<p>There are sufficient staff and other resources to achieve the goals of the Order and to carry out the school’s mission.</p>

Progress to Date

Significant and essential curriculum and instruction work was begun this year. Overseen by the administration, led by Teacher Leaders and implemented by all staff this beginning effort to build common approaches to unit planning and to establish common expectations regarding student work products was crucial and successful. It must continue with an even greater emphasis next year. Plans to do so are already in place.

Efforts to develop community themes and greater autonomy moved forward somewhat this year. Articulation agreements with institutions of higher education include specific work to define and realize the thematic approaches described in the Commissioner's Order. The differentiated program of study developed for each small learning community is evidence of growing distinction between the Arts, IT and Leadership communities.

To some degree the moderate progress toward greater autonomy was planned and reasonable. This was in part because of the urgency to focus on the instructional work described above and the need to address NEASC accreditation responsibilities, as well as new state regulations regarding performance based graduation requirements. In part, it was to allow basic structures to be rebuilt at Hope.

One key example of this was the success in allowing subject matter staff from across the complex to spend time together building common approaches and professional norms. This work must continue, but more and more next year a focus on the autonomy of the small learning communities will be built upon this foundation.

There is a standing Data Committee supported by an outside expert that is a functioning forum for data analysis. While links to other governance structures must be strengthened, this group is a real asset.

School improvement (POP) plans were submitted for each of the three SLCs. This was an important ceremonial step in the right direction. These plans improved with every edition. Data was used to frame challenges and solutions. Broad efforts were made to make sure all faculty members had a chance to provide feedback and input. The plans address district priorities and describe changed student and staff behaviors consistent with guidance from the state.

While the current block schedule has been a positive invention because of how it allows longer, uninterrupted periods of time for instruction, changes need to be made and are in the works. In particular there is near consensus that the common planning time available each Wednesday should be moved to the afternoon so that student lateness is reduced.

While there is little evidence of a discernible 9th and 10th grade academy structure, the interests represented by this structural design are being addressed to some degree. This summer a transition plan will be implemented for incoming ninth graders. This effort will familiarize students with life at the Hope Complex. There are opportunities for

students to “explore” the various themes represented by the three Small Learning Communities at Hope to the limited extent that these have been defined to date.

Order has been restored to Hope. This was an essential step to secure time for learning. The administration is committed to maintaining a positive and caring climate. This remains a critical part of a formula for success. The leadership of this effort must be shared among a much larger circle of responsible staff and students so that more members of the Hope community take responsibility for order and climate.

The School Improvement Teams (SITs) are up and running at various levels of effectiveness. Parent and student participation is still too low. Too few core educational decisions are made. However, the importance of these structures and the progress they have made cannot be understated. The members take the work seriously and it is expected that they will continue to develop positively. There are plans under development to address concerns about the roles and responsibilities of SITs.

The current budget situation continues to provide enormous challenges for the entire district – Hope included. However, within this context staffing patterns have been realigned with current priorities. For example, in order to address the drastic under preparedness of incoming students and to enhance the autonomy of the three SLCs additional English Language Arts and Math teachers have been assigned to Hope.

Strongest Performance, Areas In Need and Areas Of Critical Concern

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Learning Standards: Continued work on school wide and unit plan rubrics; the review of student work; and efforts to create common expectations for student performance are moving forward.
- ✓ Inclusive Data Driven Planning: Data Team established and contributing to decision making.
- ✓ Community: There is a growing sense of school spirit among students.

The areas in need of improvement include:

- ✓ Autonomy and identity of each SLC: Greater differentiation of purpose that defines each of the three SLCs at Hope needs articulation.
- ✓ Shared Decision Making: School Site Councils are in place and operating. Structures must be redefined to allow for a greater decision making role for the SITs. Teacher, parent, student and community member roles must be expanded and strengthened in formal decision making structures.
- ✓ Student Interests: More must be done to access information about student interests and to use that information to influence program development.
- ✓ System for Ensuring Student Success: Building student and staff ownership of the code of conduct remains an essential “next step.”
- ✓ Sufficient Resources: Technology resources and other needed material resources must be delivered to Hope immediately.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time.

At this time, the overall progress in compliance area #1 –*Three Small Learning Communities* - is determined to be *satisfactory*.

Area #2 – Personalization

Personalization at Hope: What are we trying to accomplish.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Instruction	Work at Hope is personal. Instruction is rooted in relevance, relationships and individualized. It is driven by student needs, interests and learning styles. High standards are maintained.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Advisory Structure▪ Adult Advocate▪ Family connections	Advisories are a deeply rooted and embedded part of the school through which service referrals and family communications are managed. Every Hope student has an adult advocate whom they can identify. There is two-way, monthly communication between advisors and parents regarding how their child is doing in school and what the plans are for next steps. Staff is out in the communities where students live – exploring, learning and building relationships.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Individual Learning Plans	Individual Learning Plans are the heart of the matter at Hope. They are developed and implemented fully. They guide all activities related to student activities and direction. They are developed in partnerships with student, families and appropriate community partners. They are taken seriously and amended regularly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Counseling	The Comprehensive Counseling model is applied consistently and pervasively at Hope.

Progress to Date

The Commissioner’s Decision and Order links personalization most directly to the establishment of 1) student advisories, 2) Individual Learning Plans, 3) the related personalization of learning experiences through increased community-based learning opportunities, 4) the implementation of the Comprehensive Counseling model, and 5) compliance with the broad scope of *Regents High School Regulations*.

The 2006 SALT Survey data shows positive movement in terms of staff and student perceptions about connectedness and belonging. Advisories are in place. Student and staff perceptions about advisories are positive. As reported through an in school survey roughly 75% of students report feeling “more connected” to their advisor. A set of guide materials is available for advisories organized by grade level. These activities and readings are rated by students and staff as “helpful”.

While there is some shared understanding of what is expected, more needs to be done to articulate an overall framework for advisories. The central goals for each grade level need to be clearly articulated and understood by staff, students and parents. There is a group identified to build on the survey developed this spring to create a fuller evaluation process for advisories this fall.

Individual Learning Plans have been implemented at Hope. They were the central focus of advisory activities this winter and then again this spring. The quality and substance of these plans is at “beginning” stages as should be expected. However, it should be noted that the approach at Hope has been the focus of extremely positive attention locally, regionally and nationally.

To build on this very good start, high quality support is needed to increase student and parent understanding and participation in creating these plans. Likewise, further, effective professional development must be provided to Hope educators to enhance the quality of these plans and their eventual impact on student outcomes.

Personalization of instruction at Hope still needs attention. The system of accessing meaningful out of school experiences to match particular student “interests” has been initiated. There will be intern placements this summer based, in part, on student interests. This is an important step toward creating a more relevant, real world experience for Hope students.

The goal of implementing a Comprehensive School Counseling Model at Hope is in sight. As with most of the staff, the Guidance Department continues to exhibit real leadership and professionalism in numerous ways.

Progress is being made toward compliance with the Rhode Island Regents High School Regulations. The work at Hope regarding Performance-based Graduation Requirements (PBGR) is underway. Portfolio artifacts are being collected this spring for the class of 2008 as required. School wide indicators rubrics have been identified. Work will continue next year in refining and applying these measures of student success.

Outreach to parents needs significant attention. Within the context of advisories, advisors must be supported to do more in terms of contacting parents and guardians and building relationships focused on knowing students and eradicating anonymity at Hope.

Strongest Performance, Areas In Need and Areas Of Critical Concern

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Comprehensive School Counseling Model: There is a strong guidance process in place rooted in a strong base of well prepared professionals.
- ✓ Advisories: They are up and running and planning for their improvement is continuous.
- ✓ Performance-Based Graduation Requirements: Portfolio artifacts being collected, scored and calibrated.

- ✓ Individual Learning Plans: A process for developing and revising ILPs is in place.

The areas in need of improvement include:

- ✓ Instruction (Applied Learning): Personalization in teaching and learning particularly the utilization of internships and other community placements remains a priority that needs attention.
- ✓ Advisories (Family Connections): Clear expectations must be articulated and support provided so that faculty can fulfill the responsibilities defined in the Commissioner's Order.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time.

At this time, the overall progress in compliance area #2 – *Personalization at Hope* - is determined to be *satisfactory*.

Area #3 – Professionalism at Hope

Professionalism at Hope -What are we trying to accomplish.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership 	<p>Hope is a model of professionalism. It is a place where strong support and strong accountability meet. Leaders put an emphasis on articulating a vision and a mission and they maintain a persistent focus on student learning.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teaching and Learning ▪ Case Loads 	<p>The building teems with professional activities – all hours - such as, team meetings at which student work is the centerpiece; extra-help sessions with students, meetings with parents. Instruction is based on the district scope and sequence and characterized by high expectations for all students. Reaching out beyond the school walls to find ways to engage students is the norm not the exception. Instruction and assessment are seamless, integrated functions evidenced, in part, by performance tasks that take full advantage of real world, service-learning opportunities provided by partners. Caseloads are consistent with district and state policy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher Quality and Leadership 	<p>Staff expertise is characterized by strong subject matter knowledge, a wide variety of teaching strategies, a deep familiarity with student interests and learning styles, as well as, access to up to date information about community-based opportunities for students. Staff participates in governance.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation System 	<p>There is a credible and professional evaluation process based on high standards of professional performance. This system succeeds in identifying and responding to identified areas of strength and weakness. There are clear avenues of recognition, support and consequence.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professional Development 	<p>Professional development is both systemic and systematic. There is a strong plan for professional development. Professional development is deeply rooted in student and staff performance data. All staff have My Plans (district sanctioned, individual professional development plans) that are related to school goals, evaluation results and student learning needs and interests. There are high quality professional learning activities offered through out the school year, which are consistent with the prescriptions of the Order.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resources and Support 	<p>There are sufficient staff and other resources so that teachers can fulfill their responsibilities. Teacher leaders are in place and have a positive impact on the quality of instruction.</p>

Progress to Date

Earlier reports identified administrative leadership as primary reasons for the initial successes at Hope. In particular, the commitment and consistency of the three lead administrators has made a huge positive difference across the complex.

Expanding and formalizing broader institutional leadership structures consistent with the Commissioner's Order will occur this summer in preparation for next year. Specifically, the establishment of a Cross Complex Leadership team is an essential step toward building a community based on the principles mutual respect, collaboration and trust. This is essential and must be supported fully and vigilantly.

Nearly half of teacher respondents in 2004 identified "lack of time for planning" and "support" as significant issues. The 2006 SALT Survey shows a shift in this area. More staff feel more supported in efforts to achieve targeted reforms.

Time is a rich resource at Hope. The schedule allows for significant professional development activities. This time has been used more and more effectively this year. The focus on departmental meetings in which unit plans were developed, shared and critiqued has been identified as very positive and important by staff.

Balancing the use of available time is continuous challenge at Hope. There are many competing needs. Next year there are plans to support departmental meetings, Small Learning Community development and whole school complex activities – in that order of priority.

The Commissioner's Order raises an expectation that teaching and learning "encompass a variety of instructional opportunities that extend beyond the traditional school day." The SALT Survey data relates to this challenge. Last year, on average more than 70% of teachers at Hope said that at least weekly the "real world applications of course material" were discussed and emphasized. Less than 20% of students reported that most of the time or always that their "classroom activities are connected to the world outside the classroom" with similar results regarding the relevance of school work to their "lives outside of school."

There has been little change in these perceptions. This accurately reflects the priorities pursued this year. While it is understandable that other areas have received greater attention to date, efforts to involve a wider range of community opportunities must be pursued next year. As with the development of themes, the danger is that if these strategies are not pursued from the outset of instructional reform that they may never be integrated fully into instructional designs.

However, even as these strategies – extended learning opportunities and thematic approaches to learning – must never be mistaken as more than a vehicle for strengthening achievement of academic and cross cutting standards of student achievement.

The staff at Hope is very strong. Individually, at least three distinct and significant contributions can be identified. First, the strength of the "remaining staff." Fifty percent of Hopes current staff chose to return after the delivery of the Commissioner's Order a year ago last winter. Overall, the sense of history, professionalism and determination these returning staff embody has been a consistent positive influence.

The nearly twenty five percent of experienced teachers for whom this was their first year at Hope provided another different positive influence. The decision to enter a high-profile situation has been marked by expertise and commitment.

Finally, the influence of the nearly twenty five percent of teachers who are new to teaching has been a huge plus for Hope. Flavored by idealism, founded in good preparation and characterized by innovation the contribution of these new educators cannot be overstated.

Together, these three cadres of professionals have enabled Hope to maintain momentum. There is still work to be done to build a closer, more collegial community. This is a shared challenge, with significant responsibility resting with the lead administrators.

Teacher Leaders have managed the implementation of curricular reform at Hope. They have met together regularly to create their own professional norms and to facilitate consistent approaches to teaching and learning with their peers. Other emerging contributions include consultation on the development of future professional learning activities for the staff as a whole.

Roles and responsibilities for Teacher Leaders have been revised based on learnings from this first year. Based on this framework, a clearer supervision and evaluation process must be implemented to ensure continued quality control.

The development of a high-quality, peer evaluation system described in the Order still needs implementation. It is expected that district wide efforts to pilot a peer-based teacher evaluation process will take place beginning early next fall. If this effort does not move forward, then a school-based approach will be initiated before the beginning of the school year.

Strongest Performance, Areas In Need and Areas Of Critical Concern

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Leadership: High quality, focused and determined lead administrators. Committed teacher leaders and SIT chairs and members.
- ✓ Teacher Leaders: Good people working effectively to support curriculum reform.
- ✓ Teacher Quality: A full complement of highly qualified staff.
- ✓ Teaching and Learning: Efforts to create common expectations have been very positive.
- ✓ Professional Development: While more work remains to create a more cogent overall plan for Hope, great strides have been made to provide support for professional learning.

The areas in need of improvement:

- ✓ Leadership (Distribution of Responsibilities): Plans to further distribute and define leadership responsibilities are a high priority.
- ✓ Evaluation Systems: Plans for the development of a performance-based accountability system are under development at the district level. It is unclear if these will actually be piloted next year.
- ✓ Resources and Support: Continuing to analyze the staffing patterns necessary to achieve strong and satisfactory student outcomes must serve as a guide for future budget development within the PPSP.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time.

At this time, the overall progress in compliance area #3- *Professionalism at Hope* - is determined to be – *satisfactory*.

Area # 4 – Active Parents And Engaged Community

Active Parents and Engaged Community at Hope: What are we trying to accomplish.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High Quality Plans for Parent Involvement ▪ Participation in Governance 	<p>Parent and community engagement at Hope is persistent, full and is the result of a high quality planning effort. Parents are welcome at Hope. They are present during the day in and out of classrooms as volunteers and observers. School “events” are filled with parents and community partners. Parents and community partners are fully involved in governance.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustained Organization 	<p>There is assistance provided to organize parents into a vibrant, active organized group that creates and follows-up on innovations to support student learning. Alumni are organized and active in supporting and challenging the school system.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Written Community Partnership Agreements ▪ Real Educational Connections 	<p>Clear, results-oriented, significant and written partnership agreements that specify roles and responsibilities exist and drive partner activities. There are various connections made and nurtured with Providence Middle Schools, other High Schools and, in particular, with higher education. These “connections” result in high rates of matriculation, persistence and graduation into and out of high education institutions for Hope graduates.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inclusive Curriculum Design 	<p>Community partners and parents are deeply involved in decisions and planning regarding curriculum. They contribute as plans are developed, not just as respondents to plans created by others.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinated Delivery of Services ▪ Linked Through Advisories 	<p>The High School is the center of a coordinated service delivery system that includes student support services, social services and other opportunities for student engagement with partners. At least one family member – other than the student – is contacted at least once every two months concerning the status and performance of the student in question. Families receive regular and timely updates about and invitations to school activities. Parent Compacts are agreed to and signed by a large majority of parents.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meaningful Youth Leadership 	<p>Youth leadership is obvious and taken seriously at Hope as there is a vibrant, active student government through which student voices are heard on a myriad of topics – social, academic, operational, political and financial.</p>

Progress to Date

One the one hand, there have been some significant increases in specific indicators related to parent involvement at Hope. Responses to the SALT survey skyrocketed this year from a few dozen returned questionnaires to over 350. Obviously, this by itself will not transform parent involvement at the Commissioner's Order requires. However, it is a positive sign of the seriousness with which professional educators at Hope view engaging families. The numbers of parents attending Hope events has risen as well. Parent teacher conferences attracted hundreds not just the handfuls of years past. These are all good signs. The automated phone dialing system has ensured consistent information to families. The results of the 2006 SALT survey are consistent with years past with some promising trends.

There has been a concerted effort to provide various and frequent opportunities for parents and staff to connect. All Hope parents and guardians have been invited to some part of nearly one hundred hours of open houses and other activities. Still participation is lower than anyone would like. When interviewed and asked about priorities for next year, the staff consistently identified engaging parents more actively as near the top of their list.

In short, progress on Parent Involvement at Hope has been modest at best. In order to move ahead, a well planned, consistent and staffed effort must be established at Hope. The recently submitted POP plans include strategies for parent involvement, but a more cogent and comprehensive plan still needs to be developed and implemented.

The higher education partnerships in place at Hope have been a highlight of this past year. Real, substantive agreements, backed up by action are now in place. These partnerships are providing: after school opportunities for Arts SLC students; curriculum revision for the IT SLC; course work for Leadership SLC and redesign assistance for all three. Parents are in ESL classes, teachers are learning about behavior management; students are benefiting from direct service.

Youth Leadership needs to move ahead at Hope. On an individual basis there are more and more opportunities for students to express themselves to an interested, available adult. This is very important and positive. It is becoming clear to many Hope students that "teachers are talking about them" in a way that sends a message of shared concern and interest.

More should and will be done regarding institutional structures to support student voice. Hope is not a democracy, but it operates in one and there should be greater emphasis put on preparing students to participate and contribute in ways that will serve them as adults and effective citizens. Councils are in place at some grade levels in some SLCs. However, real dynamic efforts to enhance student voice have yet to emerge. There are interested faculty members, there is a need; resources must be directed toward this effort.

Student discipline must become more and more of a self-managed issue by students themselves. Next year, plans are underway for students themselves to introduce discipline policies and procedures to incoming students. This is exactly the kind of effort that must be achieved. An orientation for students who enter the school after the first days of the regular school year also needs to be offered.

One highlight this spring was the gathering of over 300 Hope alumni. This can serve as a foundation for building another facet of community support for Hope. Steps will be taken this summer and next year to engage interested former Hope students in supporting the Complex in a variety of ways.

The work of the H2O after school program at Hope is growing. There are good relationships between program staff and school staff. However, there needs to be a clearer set of shared goals established and follow through to manage this partnership more fully.

Strongest Performance, Areas of Greatest Need and Areas Of Critical Concern

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Real Education Connections: Building relationships with middle schools and institutions of higher education will help create a seamless educational pathway for Hope students.
- ✓ Written Community Partner Agreements: These will clarify roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ Inclusive Curriculum Design: While room for improvement remains, partners are involved.

The areas of greatest need for improvement include:

- ✓ Participation in Governance: Parent and community participation has improved.
- ✓ High Quality Plans for Parent Involvement: Clarity of these approaches integrated into the schools POP plan remains an essential step.
- ✓ Sustained Organization: Supporting the formation of separate Parent and Alumni groups remains a priority.
- ✓ Coordinated Delivery of Services: Needs focused district attention.
- ✓ Meaningful Youth Leadership: Students at Hope must be more fully engaged in improvement efforts.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time.

At this time, the overall progress in compliance area #4- *Active Parents/Engaged Community* - is determined to be **satisfactory**.

Part III – Providence School District Support

This past winter strong concerns were raised about Providence School District support of efforts at Hope. Specifically, there were two areas identified as in “greatest need.”

- ✓ *Facilities Improvements: The situation at Hope remains dire. While efforts have been made, significant work remains. Unattended this will lead to unsafe and unsupportable learning environments that will risk accreditation as well as student and staff wellbeing.*
- ✓ *Technology Infrastructure: District staff in this area of operations is competent and effective when they are available. However, it seems that the capacity levels leads to long delays in responsiveness.*

Progress Report #2 December 2005

Progress in these areas has been positive. While serious issues remain – in particular the dangerous disrepair of the school auditorium - steps have been taken to address many facilities issues at Hope. It is still a Complex in need of enormous renovation to align its form with its function, but the responsiveness of the district office has improved.

This spring also saw an ad hoc committee focus on the technology infrastructure needs at Hope in general and for the IT community in particular. The districts Chief Information Officer participated on that group. The results are an emerging, strategic and customized technology plan for Hope that is aligned with the district’s longer term plans. The challenge now is to find ways to fund what is needed to make Hope up to date technology wise and to make Hope IT a reality.

Another important piece of the puzzle has been the continued communication and relationship with the Providence Teachers Union (PTU.) Issues that come up are usually managed through effective problem solving between the district office, Commissioner’s Office and Union leadership. In addition, the continued support and challenge of the Providence Educational Excellence Coalition (PEEC) has been a positive influence.

The influence of the Superintendent’s office has also been very significant and positive for Hope. The district’s most senior staff continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to adhering to the Commissioner’s Order and real improvement at Hope.

However, in order to create more effective and responsive “systems,” a more formalized approach is needed. The Superintendent’s High School Steering Committee is a natural incubator for this kind of function. The arrival of a new administrator responsible for High Schools will further enhance district capacity to support efforts at Hope as well as other High Schools.

There are other, numerous areas where greater district capacity would serve Hope and other Providence Schools. The areas of professional development planning; data analysis; human resource development; facilitation skills and facilities improvement are just some of the areas that must be enhanced in order to provide the kind of systemic support to which the district aspires. However, the district remains understaffed and

without sufficient resources and thus less able to respond. Even within this context district staff, for the most part, strive to do what they can.

The eventual goal of the state intervention at Hope is to support a self-sustaining effort by the district to improve schools. In their current condition, district services will continue to be only as good as the ingenuity of skilled and committed staff working in a extremely difficult context can provide.

Without an enhancement of capacity, continued efforts to focus district operations and improve efficacy, rooted in stronger accountability systems for district staff, district based efforts to lead school improvement at Hope and other Providence schools is in danger of being limited. This at a time and in a context where improving schools for the sake of increased student outcomes is the highest priority.

Part IV– Closing

“Satisfactory” does not seem to adequately describe the progress made at Hope this year. The reality is that the status of the school defies a one-word designation. Progress has been very good in many areas, less substantial in others. In some of these cases, it is obvious that original plans and time frames established in the Order were not appropriate and changes were made. In others case, more progress should have been made.

The climate has changed for the good. It is a safe school where basic, positive, respectful student teacher interactions are now the norm. Real, substantive partnerships with institutions of higher education are in place. And while the high levels and coordination of activity continue to be a challenge in themselves – sometimes confusing, not always perfectly organized and managed - there is an irrefutable sense that the school is focused on teaching and learning and moving forward.

Many agree that the school is poised to “move to the next level” regarding nearly all facets of reform. After a year of getting their feet back under them, the foundation seems stronger. The central challenge remains: How to accelerate change so that the community is able to achieve great gains versus more modest ones?

This is critical because moderate improvements still leave hundreds of students at risk of failure. Cutting the drop out rate even in half – on the one hand an enormous achievement - would still predict that at least one fifth of entering ninth graders will leave without a degree. This at a time when success in high school is not an acceptable end of ones education, but a step toward the sufficient preparation that comes through post secondary education.

There is still a real possibility that great gains can be made at Hope. Improvements of this magnitude depend on achieving the myriad of programmatic improvements embedded in the Commissioner’s Order. In addition, immediate attention to a critical subset of strategies can ensure eventual, historic improvements.

First, students must be in school to succeed. This was identified at the beginning of the year as a critical goal. Attendance rates must be increased. Parent involvement and relationships with students lie at the heart of this issue. Pursuing students on an individual basis when they are in school and reaching out to them at home are strategies that must be strengthened and formalized at Hope. Enhancements to the advisory program and the expectations placed on faculty to build relationships with families must be made for next year.

Second, efforts to clarify, align and improve teaching and learning took some strong steps forward this year. The review of instructional programs must continue in earnest. This must be a data based, ruthlessly honest self-reflection of practice. Long held assumptions about effective teaching strategies must be put on the table for examination. Effective approaches should be enhanced, ineffective ones discarded. Professional development plans are central to achieving these ends.

Next steps will include: a deeper examination of thematic approaches; further integration of community resources and opportunities to create greater real world opportunities for students and staff; and continued work on building shared understanding about what is expected from students in terms of quality work. Autonomy must be a means to this end that is pursued diligently.

Third, the implementation of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) this year could, in years to come, be seen as one of the most important developments at Hope. This will only be true if the depth of these plans and the persistence with which they are used grows. This means that these ILPs need to be a common part of teacher planning sessions; parent teacher conferences; student portfolios; community partner engagements, and so on.

Personalization is much more than keeping a record of goals, activities and accomplishment; it includes creating structures and practices where programs and teaching revolve around student interests and needs. However, at Hope these two need to go hand in hand.

Fourth, while the culture and climate at Hope have improved significantly, next steps remain. These include: continuing to “distribute” leadership in all areas and continuing to build a true community of professionals based on high quality, two way communication; trust and a shared vision of student and school success.

The foundation for this kind of community building has been laid. Successful development of a professional culture is a shared responsibility among all participants. However, given the way school governance and operations are structured, the leverage to create this is significantly in the hands of the lead administrators.

They have done so much, so well. Structures must now be put into place to allow for deeper, broader conversations about school reform - leadership spread out among a wider group of players. The Order expects that a broad, cross complex leadership team be in place. The commitment on the part of senior leadership to achieve this transition is genuine. It must be actualized.

Fifth, a wide range of district operations impact Hope significantly. There is a need for deep review of capacity at the district office.

Hope has been somewhat insulated from the impact of ongoing budget struggles because of its status with the state. Without this special consideration, even the gains made this year would be at risk due to rescissions in staff and other budget driven reductions. Even given its special status, there is more that should be in place at Hope in terms of staff and resources.

While the impacts on Hope have been significant and limiting, the overall budget situation also bodes poorly for the future of other schools that are becoming the focus of intense improvement efforts in partnership between the district and the state. Greater efficiencies should always be the first step. However, at some point adequate resources must be applied to match the extraordinary levels of improvement needed. This has yet to happen.

There is strong leadership in place at the district office. Much of what needs to happen to support Hope – and other schools – will depend on the efficacy of senior administrators at the central office and the political will of city officials to enact the districts strategic plan as it embodies many positive inventions.

None of these could be more important to Hope than the continuous improvement of supervision and evaluation processes. The Order demands a peer-based teacher evaluation system at Hope. The district is leading toward this effort district wide.

Formal evaluation processes alone will never drive successful school reform,, any more than test scores will sufficiently describe student achievement. However, without improved evaluation structures, the genuine commitment of staff towards success will remain a voluntary activity subject to numerous distractions and impediments.

In summary, while every facet of the Commissioner’s Order must remain a priority, particular attention will be paid to the issues listed above in the months and year to come most of which already have implementation plans developed or in progress.

- ✓ Attendance
- ✓ Parent Involvement
- ✓ Instruction
- ✓ Individual Learning Plans
- ✓ Distributed Leadership and Professional Culture
- ✓ Staff Supervision and Evaluation Systems.

For most of this year, the role of the Special Master has been to support, challenge and occasionally intervene on decisions regarding implementation of the Commissioner’s Order.

In the year to come, progress on the issues listed above will directly determine any changes in this posture. Positive movement on these and other issues is expected to come through the actions of school and district staff. Lack of significant progress will lead to greater direct influence and progressive intervention.

Despite the specter of state intervention, the enormity of the challenges, the ambitious nature of the goals and the difficulty of the specific tasks - Hope’s future is very bright. Founded on the strengths of the staff that works there, the commitment of the partners taking root, and the resiliency of the students who attend, it has been a good year.

So, the stakes remain high – the future of the community’s young people. However, the rewards will be “priceless” - the future of the community itself. In the words of more than one student, *“People used to call this place ‘Hope-less,’ now it is becoming known as ‘Hope-ful.’”*